

News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Rabies Concerns Continue in Flagstaff Area

Coconino County Health Department (CCHD) officials confirmed that two additional foxes have tested positive for rabies. The foxes were found near Paradise Drive and near Lockett Drive in Flagstaff. There are no known human exposures. This brings the Flagstaff area total number of rabid wild animals since November 2008 to 23 (16 foxes, six skunks, and one ringtail).

Recently the Coconino County Board of Supervisors declared a Rabies Pet Quarantine in the Flagstaff area. The Quarantine, which began on Wednesday, April 8, 2009, was enacted for two specific purposes.

- First, it is intended to reduce the risk of rabies exposure to humans by placing restrictions on pet owners and pets in areas in and around Flagstaff. This action was deemed necessary due to a substantial increase in the number of rabid wild animals found in and around the Flagstaff area.
- Second, later in the Quarantine period, it provides the Coconino County Health Department (CCHD) and participating organizations the authority to place oral vaccine packets, as needed, to immunize gray fox. The CCHD has requested funding from the U.S. Department of Agriculture/Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service/Wildlife Services to purchase the vaccination packets for gray fox to be distributed in areas with increased rabies numbers.

Because wild animals become very aggressive when rabid, there is a high level of concern regarding public safety and the safety of domestic animals. The Quarantine places certain mandatory restrictions on residents within the Quarantine area.

- All cats and dogs must be confined within an enclosure or secured on the owner's property; or when not on the owner's property, pets must be on a leash no longer than six feet. Cats or dogs found at-large in the area will be impounded.
- All persons within the Quarantine Area who own or control domesticated dogs and cats must make sure that their pets are vaccinated and that vaccinations are up to date. Vaccinations are available from your local veterinarian. To help pet owners meet this

requirement, low-cost Rabies Vaccination Clinics will be held at Second Chance Center for Animals, 11665 N. US Highway 89, Flagstaff, on Wednesday, April 22 and Wednesday, May 13 from 1:00 pm to 5:00 pm. The cost for rabies vaccinations is \$6.00 (dogs and cats). Checks and cash payment will be accepted.

- Pet owners must not leave pet food outside after sundown
- Compost bins and piles must be completely enclosed.
- Wild animals may not be trapped within the Quarantine area or transported outside the area without prior written approval.

Health officials are reminding the public to use caution while engaging in outdoor activities and to always avoid any wild animal, particularly one that appears to be sick, is dead, or is behaving in a strange manner.

The following precautions will help to reduce risk of exposure to rabies:

- Avoid any wild animals. People who feed or handle wild animals, and pets coming into contact with wild animals, risk possible exposure to rabies.
- **If hiking with a dog, keep it on a leash no more than six feet in length. Do not let your dog wander freely on the trails as it could come into contact with a wild animal, increasing its risk of exposure to rabies.** State law requires that dogs be leashed and kept from running at large. This includes dogs on Forest Service trail system. This provision also includes land under the control of both State and Federal government. There are several signs posted by the US Forest Service throughout the trail system as reminders of this law.
- Bring a trekking pole or walking stick with you on your hikes. If you see a fox near you, turn around and go the other way. Do not run. Walk slowly and keep an eye on the fox to ensure it is not following you. If a fox runs at you, use your trekking pole or walking stick to stun the fox and move as quickly as you can out of the area. Remember normal behavior in a fox is shyness and avoiding any human or domestic interaction. If a fox is coming at you or at your dog, something is wrong.
- Report any unusual behavior. Call CCHD Animal Management at 928-679-8756. After hours call the Sheriff's Department at 928-774-4523 immediately. Be sure to give very specific directions to the person taking your information and a phone number so the officer can contact you.
- If you are bitten by a fox or other wild animal immediately go to the hospital and inform the staff of your situation. The hospital staff will contact the appropriate agency to collect the animal. Try to give specific directions to the agency investigator to ensure they can locate the animal.
- **Have your pet vaccinated against rabies. Arizona State law requires all dogs to be properly vaccinated and licensed. It is also strongly recommended that cats be vaccinated against rabies. Vaccinations are available at local veterinarians or at periodically scheduled CCHD Rabies Vaccination Clinics.**

Although foxes and skunks are not usually observed in the daytime, they may be out in the day searching for food. This is particularly true of females who have recently given birth as they need to feed their young. If a wild animal is behaving in a strange manner, such as acting aggressive, staggering, or will not back away, call CCHD Animal Management at 928-679-8756. After hours call the Sheriff's Department at 928-774-4523.

A copy of the Quarantine Declaration, the Quarantine amendment, and a map showing the Quarantine area are available at www.coconino.az.gov/health.

For more information, call Coconino County Health Department Animal Management at (928) 679-8756.

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